Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A communications back-channel, for coordinating routing decisions, the communications back channel comprising:

a plurality of networking devices;

a plurality of routing intelligence units, wherein each of the plurality of routing intelligence units includes software programmed to control a ~~distinct~~ corresponding subset of the plurality of networking devices, each of the plurality of routing intelligence units ~~further~~ including:

one or more processes programmed to control ~~the distinct~~ a corresponding subset of networking devices; and

one or more coordination processes programmed to generate and ~~directly~~ exchange routing performance information with the remaining plurality of routing intelligence units; [[and]]

a mesh ~~directly~~ coupling the one or more coordination processes, wherein the one or more coordination processes are programmed to exchange [[only]] routing performance information over the mesh; and

a set of links separate from the mesh and coupling the plurality of routing intelligence units to the plurality of networking devices.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The communications back-channel of claim 1, wherein the one or more processes programmed to control the distinct subset of networking devices are Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) sessions.

Claim 3 (original): The communications back-channel of claim 2, wherein each of the routing intelligence units is a route-reflector client.

Claim 4 (original): The communications back-channel of claim 3, wherein each of the distinct subset of networking devices is a route reflector to the route reflector client.

Claim 5 (original): The communications back-channel of claim 1, wherein the one or more coordination process in each of the routing intelligence units includes BGP sessions.

Claim 6 (previously presented): The communications back-channel of claim 5, wherein the BGP sessions in the one or more coordination processes of each of the routing intelligence units includes:

at least one BGP process; and

at least one BGP stack, such that the at least one BGP stack is programmed to exchange routing performance information between the routing intelligence unit and the at least one BGP process, and the at least one BGP process is programmed to exchange routing performance information with the plurality of routing intelligence units.

Claim 7 (original): The communications back-channel of claim 6, wherein the at least one BGP stack is a route reflector client, and the at least one BGP process is a route reflector.

Claim 8 (previously presented): The communications back-channel of claim 6, wherein the routing performance information includes local path performance characteristics.

Claim 9 (previously presented): The communications back-channel of claim 6, wherein the routing performance information includes performance scores for routes.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The communications back-channel of claim 9, wherein the performance scores are included in a Local Preference field in accordance with BGP.

Claim 11-13 (canceled)

Claim 14 (previously presented): A method of exchanging routing performance information amongst a plurality of decision makers, each decision maker controlling a distinct subset of a plurality of routers, wherein the plurality of decision makers are in communication via a mesh dedicated to exchanging routing performance information, the method comprising:

asserting a first plurality of preferred routes for a first plurality of prefixes to the subset of routers; and

concurrent with the asserting the first plurality of preferred routes, sending a plurality of local performance scores generated from performance measurements for the first plurality of routes to the plurality of decision makers via the mesh.

Claim 15 (previously presented): The method of claim 14, further comprising:

receiving a second plurality of routes for a second plurality of prefixes via the mesh.

Claim 16 (original): The method of claim 15, further comprising:

receiving a plurality of performance scores for the second plurality of routes.

Claim 17 (original): The method of claim 16, wherein the plurality of performance scores are included in one or more Local Preferences fields in a BGP feed.

Claim 18 (original): The method of claim 16, further comprising:

applying penalties to each of the plurality of performance scores.

Claim 19 (original): The method of claim 14, wherein the asserting the first plurality of preferred routes is performed via a BGP feed to the subset of routers.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The method of claim 14, wherein the plurality of local performance scores are sent via a BGP feed to the mesh.

Claim 21 (previously presented): The method of claim 14, wherein the mesh is at least partially comprised of physical links between the plurality of decision makers.

Claim 22 (previously presented): The method of claim 14, wherein the mesh is at least partially comprised of logical links between the plurality of decision makers.

Claim 23 (previously presented): A communications back-channel for coordinating routing decisions, the communications back channel comprising:

a plurality of routers;

a plurality of routing intelligence units, wherein each of the plurality of routing intelligence units includes software for controlling a distinct subset of the plurality of routers, wherein each of the plurality of routing intelligence units further includes:

one or more processes for controlling the distinct subset of routers; and

one or more coordination processes for exchanging performance information among the plurality of routing intelligence units; and

a mesh directly coupling each of the plurality of routing intelligence units to the remaining routing intelligence units, the plurality of routing intelligence units programmed to exchange only performance information over the mesh.

Claim 24 (previously presented): The communications back-channel of claim 1, wherein a first process from the one or more processes programmed to control the distinct subset of routing devices peers to one or more of the plurality of networking devices, to a second process from the one or more processes for controlling the distinct subset of networking devices, and to a routing infrastructure exchange.